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ABSTRACT

Career education needs improvement at all educational levels in Mississippi according to summarized results of a 1976 survey of students and faculty in public schools and in schools for the blind, deaf, and crippled students. Among sixth grade students, 64% feel their parents can best advise them regarding a career, while 49% of twelfth grade students feel teachers and counselors can be most helpful. Junior college and college sophomores feel teachers and parents are equally influential. Physically disadvantaged students depend to a much greater degree on their teachers and counselors for career information and are more oriented to jobs than to careers. They need more career awareness. Students at all levels need to assess their interests, values, and goals in preparation for career choices. They also need to understand the relationship of the curriculum to the world of work, but only 18% of ninth graders have teachers who often relate school to work. Most public school teachers and fewer teachers of the disadvantaged want to teach career education although they feel unprepared to do so and need inservice training. The Mississippi State Career Education Advisory Board is using the findings in planning comprehensive career education throughout the state. (SB)

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BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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AN ASSESSMENT OF CAREER EDUCATION NEEDS IN MISSISSIPPI

by Bob N. Cage, James Hancock and Sidney A. Prewitt*

This is a summary report of a statewide career education needs assessment conducted between November, 1976 and January, 1977.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of the study was to collect data from students, teachers and administrators in public elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools and in schools for the disadvantaged and handicapped as to their perceived needs for career education in Mississippi. These needs are to be used in the development of programs and learning experiences for students and faculty in the state.

Role and Scope of the Study

The state of Mississippi, through the efforts of the State Department of Education, has embarked on the development of a state plan for career education. Many persons and agencies throughout the state have contributed to the formulation of the orginal proposal which was funded by USOE to assist in its implementation. Several steps toward fulfillment of the state plan have been outlined and strategies laid for meeting related goals. One of the steps is what this study addressed.

Need for the Study

In an effort to improve public school education in Mississippi, the comprehensive educational needs of all its students need to be known. School programs are developed and implemented in direct relationship to identified needs. Goals and priorities of teachers and administrators are based on student needs. Student needs, for the purpose of this study, included self-awareness, career awareness and knowledge of how to obtain skills in preparing for a particular vocation. Teacher and administrator needs included interests and knowledge of career education.

Methodology of the Project

To meet the criteria set forth in the Mississippi State Plan for Career Education a probability sample of public school students, teachers and staff, college and junior college sophomores, and students and staff in schools for the disadvantaged was chosen for the survey. The sample included subjects (Ss) in each of the ten Mississippi Planning and Development Districts (PDD). This was done so certain demographic data pertinent to a state-wide career education program could be utilized by the State Advisory Council in their recommendation for program development.

Within each PDD, a statistical random sample of 2250 students from grades 6, 9 and 12 and 500 faculty from the respective schools were chosen for the survey. Two four-year universities and one junior college were chosen from which 250 sophomores were surveyed. In addition, students and faculty from three state schools for disadvantaged persons (Schools of the Deaf, Blind and Crippled Children) were chosen in the sample.

All data were collected via survey forms. The answers were put on 50-item mark sense cards and scored by computer. The sixth grade instrument was read to the Ss by the project staff to assure that an inability to read would not invalidate the results. The appropriate survey instrument was administered individually to the disadvantaged Ss by their own teachers or by the project staff to those public school students surveyed.

Survey Sample

The data in Table I show the distribution of the sample according to various categories. Of the 2565 students surveyed, 728 (29.2%) were in the sixth grade; 729 (29.3%) in the ninth grade; 785 (31.4%) in the twelfth grade; and 260 (10.1%) in their second year of college. Two thousand two hundred forty-two (87.4%) of the students were enrolled in public grade school systems and 63 (2.5%) were enrolled in special schools for the blind and deaf. Included in the public grade school sample were numerous disadvantaged and handicapped students.

The ethnic origin of the students was distributed as follows: 1413 (55.1%) indicated being a member of the black race; 1130 (44.0%) indicated "white" as their race and 22 (0.9%) signified a membership in other races, including American Oriental and foreign. There were 1238 male students (48.3%) and 1327 female students (51.7%).

Seven hundred sixty-four (34.1%) of the 2242 public grade school students attended schools in a community with a rural population, i.e., a population of 2500 or less. The remaining students, 1478 (65.9%) attended schools in an urban community. Eight hundred forty-seven students (37.8%) had or previously had a federally financed career education program; 1395 students (62.2%) had no such program.

Of the 260 college sophomores, 124 (47.7%) attended a two-year institution and 136 students (52.3%) attended a four-year institution. Two hundred twenty-six students (86.9%) indicated Mississippi to be their home and 34 (13.1%) signified an out-of-state or foreign residence.

Four hundred eighty-four faculty and staff members were surveyed. Of these, 403 (83.3%) worked in the public grade schools and 81 (16.7%) worked in special institutions for the disadvantaged or

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Table I

Survey Sample by Demographic Categories

Students	Total	Race			Sex				Previous Career Education	
		Black	White	Others	Male	Female	Rural	Urban	Yes	No
Public Schools										
6th grade	728	443	282	3	383	345	256	472	275	453
9th grade	729	421	302	6	349	380	234	495	268	461
12th grade	785	472	304	9	339	446	274	511	304	481
Sub-total	2242	1336	888	18	1071	1171	764	1478	847	1395
							MS	Non-MS	2-yr.	4-yr.
Post-Secondary	260	34	225	1	127	133	226	34	124	136
Special Schools										
6th grade	21	11	9	1	11	10				
9th grade	23	16	5	2	14	9				
12th grade	19	16	3		15	4				
Sub-total	63	43	17	3	40	23				
Total Students	2565	1413	1130	22	1238	1327				
Faculty/Staff	Total	Tchr	Cnslr	Prncpl	Supr	Other	Rural	Urban	Yes	No
Public Schools	403	343	22	18	5	15	134	269	137	266
Special Schools	81	71	2	2	2	4				
Total Faculty	484	414	24	20	7	19				

handicapped. The majority, 414 (85.5%) were teachers; the remainder were counselors (24), principals (20), supervisors (7), or other positions with undetermined responsibilities (19).

A third of the 403 public school employees sampled worked in a rural community, 269 worked in an urban setting. Slightly over a third (34.0%) of the individuals were employed in a school district which had or previously had a federally funded career education program; 266 employees were not.

Data in the elementary-secondary schools were collected between the dates of November 30 and December 13, 1976. Data from Ss in higher education and special schools were collected in January, 1977. Staff members from Educational Planners and Evaluators traveled to each of the 34 schools in the sample to administer the survey forms. Faculty and staff were asked to return their answer cards by mail as they did not have time to answer the questions while the EPE staff was present. Approximately 50 faculty failed to return their cards for analysis.

Findings

The data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages on individual survey items. Cluster analysis was used, where appropriate, to ascertain which items were measuring the same concept or characteristic. All comparisons between groups (e.g., rural vs urban) were analyzed using a chi-square analysis at $p \leq .01$. The terms "agreement" and "disagreement" were used to indicate whether the two groups being compared were in accord with the hypothesis of no significant difference between groups. If the term "agreement" was used, the hypothesis of no difference between groups was retained; the word "disagreement" means the hypothesis was rejected. In any dichotomous comparision it was necessary to have at least a 63 percent majority to reject the hypothesis at a probability level of $p \leq .01$.

For each identified population of students and faculty surveyed, a hierarchial list of needs was determined. Those needs are reported in this summary as well as a brief listing of significant findings that precipitated the needs.

Sixth Grade Public School Students

1. Students need to develop positive attitudes toward work and the accomplishment of tasks. They need to realize that all jobs provide satisfaction to certain people and that hard work in some jobs is not necessarily bad. Students need to see the importance of getting satisfaction from work, which may or may not be from the money earned.
2. Students need to see the relationship between school and career education. Attitude development in school has a carry-over to the world of work. Being able to see how each course they take relates to some aspect of the world of work is important.
3. Students need information to promote goal setting and decision-making concerning careers. They need to know the importance of making plans to aid in the decision-making process. They need to realize that personal goals are an important component of career choice.
4. Students need to examine their self-concept and assess the relationship between self, abilities and interests. The issue of values is of major conern. How one's personality is reflected in decision-making must be considered.
5. Students need to become familiar with the vocabulary of career education and be able to differentiate among such terms as 'career exploration', 'career awareness', and 'career development', among others. The congruence or incongruence of terms such as 'job', 'work', 'occupation', and 'career' needs to be explained.
6. Students need to see the importance of working cooperatively with their fellow man. This involves such traits as honesty, understanding other peoples' problems, and one's responsibility to his fellow man.
7. Students need to learn what work is like, if not directly, vicariously. They need to have experiences which will assist them in curriculum decisions as they progress through school, such that these curriculum decisions are related to their career choices. They need to know about job clusters and the similarity of skills across occupations.
8. Students need to know how and where to obtain occupational and career information.

9. Finally, the lack of guidance counselors in the elementary schools in Mississippi suggests that the classroom teachers must share a much greater load in initiating and implementing career education in the schools.

The significant findings in this sample which brought about the listed needs were:

a. Thirty-six percent of the sixth graders considered a career the same as a job.
b. Only 20 percent of the sixth graders said they had a school counselor and of this number only 7 percent said the counselor had given them some idea about setting vocational goals.
c. Twenty-seven percent of the students thought sixth grade too early to start planning for the future.
d. Twenty-three percent of the group said teachers did not relate school work to the world of work.
e. Forty percent of the students saw no relationship between personal values and choosing an occupation in adult life.
f. Fourteen percent of the sixth graders would quit school today if they could.
g. One third of the students have sex role stereotyping problems with certain occupations.
h. Forty-one percent believed that a person keeps the same job throughout his life-time.
i. Sixty-four percent of the group believed their parents would give them the best advice concerning any future jobs.

Ninth Grade Public School Students

1. Students need to see how the overall school curriculum is related to making career choices and how career decisions can be assisted by school curricula and school personnel.
2. Ninth grade students rely heavily on parents and family for most decision-making. Students need to see how, in addition to family, the school can be of assistance in decision-making, especially in decisions concerning career choice.
3. Students need to see the relationship between personal goals, interests, and attitudes and career decision-making.
4. Students need to become familiar with the concept of job cluster and see the relationship between job skills and certain types of work.
5. Ninth grade students did not do well in defining key terms common to the world of work. There is need for them to learn key vocabulary and concepts associated with career education.
6. If the career education program is going to be counselor-oriented, students need to recognize the role a counselor plays in career decision-making.
7. Students need to have more opportunities to see responsibility and leadership roles in school.

The results from the survey of ninth graders which supported the above needs were:

a. Seventy-five percent of the students said their teachers should give them more responsibility in school.
b. Only 18 percent of the ninth graders said their teachers related "often" what they learned in class to the world of work.
c. Only 41 percent of the group saw their curriculum as a help in choosing a career.
d. Twenty percent of the students believed ninth grade too early to start thinking about a career.
e. Only 29 percent of the students listed teachers and counselors as persons from whom they had learned about possible careers. Thirty-eight percent listed family.
f. Only 38 percent saw the need to try to match personal goals and career choice.
g. Only 32 percent said that teachers and counselors had talked to them about personal goals and career choice.
h. Forty-six percent said people who have a job are no better than people on welfare.
i. Only 61 percent could define "wages" correctly.
j. Only 26 percent could define "labor".

Twelfth Grade Public School Students

1. Teachers and counselors in high schools need to be aware that students become more dependent upon them for career information as they progress through the upper grades.
2. Curriculum offerings in high school need to be more career-oriented so that students can see the relationship between course work and the world of work.
3. Teachers and counselors, even in their informal conversations with students, should discuss several career choices rather than putting an emphasis on only one.
4. High schools need to make more use of vocational interest and aptitude tests and be responsible for explaining the results of the tests to the students.
5. High school seniors need to see more clearly the relationship between personal goals in life and career choice.
6. Students in high school need to be taught career education terminology and definitions as well as the concepts and content.
7. If high school counselors are going to be involved in a career education program, they must be given time to meet with more students than they presently meet with.
8. High school counselors, whether involved in a career education program or not, need to talk to students more about the future and career choices.
9. Rural, black high school students are more in need of career information so they can set realistic goals and make appropriate career choices.

The following findings were instrumental in developing the aforementioned needs:

a. Only 42 percent of the students named teachers and counselors as the persons from whom they learned most about the career they would like to pursue.
b. Only 49 percent viewed teachers and counselors as persons who could be most helpful in planning their career.
c. Only 53 percent of the seniors saw their curriculum as helping them choose a career.
d. Sixty-six percent of the teachers had discussed various occupations and their relationship to the subject matter they taught.
e. Teachers and staff spend almost twice as much time talking to seniors about attending a college than they do about getting a job or going to a vocational school.
f. Only 40 percent of those seniors taking vocational aptitude tests had the results explained to them or indicated they understood the results.
g. Only 46 percent of the seniors said teachers or counselors had talked to them about personal goals in life and career choice.
h. Seventy-two percent could define "wages".
i. Only thirty-six percent could define "labor".
j. Eighty-five percent of the seniors would like to talk to someone more often for assistance in planning their future.

College and Junior College Sophomores

1. Teachers in high schools in Mississippi must make their subject matter more relevant to the world of work.
2. More opportunities must be provided to high school students to obtain information about careers, job skills and actual work experience.

3. Career counseling must be expanded so as to meet the needs of the various sub-groups of student interests, e.g., different sexes, races and post-high school intents.
4. Both teachers and counselors in high schools must share the responsibility for providing career counseling and information. This is a finding consistent with the results of the twelfth grade survey.

The findings pertinent to the above listed needs are as follows:

a. One-third of the respondents made their present career choice when they were seniors in high school.
b. Thirty-four percent of the sophomores said parents were the most influential persons in helping them decide on a career. Thirty-one percent said teachers.
c. College sophomores also said grades 7-12 were the best time for students to learn about careers.
d. Forty percent said making a meaningful contribution to society had the strongest influence on their career choice.
e. Sixty-three percent said they had a better idea at present of what kind of career they wanted to pursue than when they entered college.

Public School Faculty and Staff

1. Faculty and staff, especially in grades 7-12, are interested in becoming involved in planning and implementing career education in their schools.
2. A career education program should be implemented as an integrated part of the ongoing curriculum.
3. Some type of in-service training is desired by and needed for those faculty and staff prior to program implementation as too many of them do not fully understand what is meant by 'career education'.
4. A career education program must be comprehensive in scope, emphasizing student interests, abilities and self-esteem and moral and ethical considerations as well as enhancing decision-making skills in making career choices.
5. A career education program should include work experience for academic credit, provide job information for graduates, involve parents and community persons whenever possible, and be considered a total education program rather than just one that provides occupational information.
6. Financial support for career education will have to come from state and/or Federal sources as the local level is already over-taxed.
7. Business and industry in the local communities should be involved in the career education program from the beginning to assist in the area of finance and organization and in providing career information.

The above needs were precipitated by the following significant findings:

a. Fifty-two percent said 'career education' meant 'vocational education'.
b. Sixty-eight percent of the faculty and staff believed they do not presently know how to teach (or teach about) career education.
c. Only 38 percent said to increase students' understanding of themselves and others was a career development goal.
d. Forty-two percent said the best route today to higher paying jobs is by getting a college education.
e. Only thirty-four percent said career education was total education.
f. Only 35 percent of the faculty and staff believed schools in Mississippi were presently preparing the large majority of their graduates to make good career choices.
g. The majority of faculty and staff saw career education being implemented in junior and senior high school.
h. The majority of faculty and staff could not differentiate among career education, career exploration and career awareness.
i. Only 38 percent had been involved directly or indirectly in career education in the state. However 84 percent said they would like to become involved.

Students at the School for the Deaf

1. Students need counseling and information concerning how their personal goals, interests and attitudes are related to career choice and decision-making.
2. Students need to be more career-oriented rather than job-oriented.
3. Twelfth grade students, more so than the sixth and ninth grade students, need to recognize the assistance that teachers and counselors, as well as parents, can give them in terms of career decision-making.

These needs were developed based upon the following findings:

a. The majority of the deaf students said career meant the same thing as a job.
b. The majority of students did not see any relationship between their career choice and the feelings or attitudes of others.
c. The majority of the students said their teachers make all decisions about what they do in school.
d. A minority of the high school students believed the things they learned were related to what they were interested in or to a career.
e. The majority of high school students were dependent upon their teachers and counselors for information about career choice.
f. Students in the School for the Deaf saw money as the chief influence on choice of a job.
g. Teachers and counselors had talked to only one ninth grade student and 2 twelfth grade students about the relationship of personal goals to career opportunitites.

Students at the School for the Blind.

1. The younger blind child needs to know who his/her counselor is and be made aware of the assistance this person can give in terms of career decision-making.
2. As was found with the children in the School for the Deaf, the blind students tend to be more job-oriented than they are career-oriented. Even though possibilities for vocations are limited compared to non-handicapped children, more career awareness is needed among these students.

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3. Blind students need to recognize the relationship between personal interests and goals and their choice of a career.
4. The results of all aptitude, interest and diagnostic tests need to be explained to the students so that they understand the results better than they presently do.

The following items were used to develop the needs given above.:

a. The blind students do not know the difference between career exploration and career awareness.
b. The students need to see the relationship between personal values and career choice.
c. Teachers need to pursue with the students how personal interests and abilities are related to career choice.
d. Blind students depend upon teachers and counselors most for information about possible careers.
e. Blind students see money as the biggest influence on choice of a career.
f. Blind students could define "wages" better than any other group; however not one of them could define "labor".

Faculty at the Schools for the Deaf, Blind and Crippled Children

1. The faculty and staff of disadvantaged and handicapped children should become involved in a comprehensive program which emphasizes more career education rather than vocational or career preparation that seems to presently exist.
2. In-service training is needed and desired by most of these faculty.
3. In giving due consideration where needed, the faculty and staff of the handicapped were much more congnizant of career education needs, processes and outcomes than were public school faculty and staff. Being involved in the type of program they are helps support their notion about career education.

These three needs were based upon the following findings:

a. The majority of this group could not differentiate between career exploration and career awareness.
b. The majority of this faculty viewed career guidance differently than did the public school faculty.
c. Fewer of this group wanted to get involved in a career education program than did public school faculty.

What's Next?

The State Career Education Advisory Board is presently utilizing the results of this survey. The identified needs are being implemented into goals consistent with the State plan and plans are being made to validate the State plan in selected communities.

The State Advisory Board is also conducting a survey of business, labor and industry to ascertain their input for the implementation of the State plan. Mississippi is well on its way in establishing a comprehensive plan for implementing career education.